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ABSTRACT

This report is a summary of discussions at a roundtable meeting conducted in April 2000 by the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation to discuss expanding postsecondary opportunities for low-income, working parents and welfare recipients. Section I offers background. Sections II-IX describe options for eliminating and expanding opportunities for these populations to participate and succeed in postsecondary education by doing the following: (1) using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) flexibility and resources to support participation in postsecondary education; (2) developing effective organizational structures and partnerships to improve service delivery; (3) redesigning programs and curricula to meet the needs of working individuals; (4) improving financial aid options; (5) increasing motivation for low-income individuals to attend postsecondary programs; (6) providing support and incentives to help individuals succeed in postsecondary

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education; (7) involving employers in designing training programs and promoting career advancement; and (8) pursuing strategies to affect institutional or systemic change. Appendixes include descriptions of six additional sources of funding and a list of the roundtable participants. (YLB)

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Expanding Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Workers

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Preface

This report, co-authored by Susan Golonka from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Lisa Matus-Grossman from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, is based largely on a roundtable meeting conducted in April 2000 by both organizations to discuss expanding postsecondary opportunities for low-income working parents and welfare recipients. Over the course of this day-and-a-half meeting, a wide-ranging group of policymakers and administrators from welfare, workforce development, and postsecondary education agencies gathered with national researchers, community college administrators, and foundation officers to explore the challenges of helping low-income individuals access and complete community college or other postsecondary programs. Twelve states were represented at the roundtable: California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Oregon, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, and Washington. Representatives from Macomb Community College, in Michigan; Portland Community College, in Oregon; Riverside Community College, in California; and the host college, Shoreline Community College, in Washington, attended as well.

The roundtable focused on community and technical colleges and their public sector partners, including workforce development and TANF agencies. However, many of the strategies suggested in this report for expanding access to education and increasing retention could be applied to four-year colleges and universities as well. While four-year colleges clearly offer credentials valuable in the new economy, two-year colleges are often viewed as the institutions best poised to serve welfare recipients and working adults in low-income families because of their

- mission, which focuses on the community and includes outreach to low-income members and fostering of local community and economic development;
- experience serving a diverse student body in terms of age, work experience, socioeconomic status, and racial and ethnic diversity;
- experience in offering a wide range of course offerings, including developmental (remedial) education, occupational training, liberal arts subjects, and continuing education opportunities;
- active employer involvement with occupational and customized training programs and their opportunities for short-term occupational and skills training that have immediate employment results;
- relatively open admissions policies and low tuition compared with private and many public four-year institutions; and
- potential to transfer credits earned to four-year college and university programs.

During the meeting, roundtable participants shared their perspectives on the challenges faced by adults in low-income families in accessing and successfully completing postsecondary education programs and the reasons that traditional programs and approaches have often failed. Participants discussed an array of strategies that they had adopted to improve outreach, increase

students' access to financial aid, provide needed support services, and redesign programs to make them more "worker and family friendly." Among the participants there was widespread agreement on the challenges and barriers, but also guarded optimism based on promising innovations and a sense of shared mission across the agencies and organizations represented.

This report is a summary of the roundtable discussions supplemented by additional follow-up research on strategies identified by participants. Because of the relatively recent interest in expanding postsecondary opportunities for low-income working parents, most of these strategies have not been tested or evaluated, often are on a very small scale, and may be in the early stages of implementation. However, they are illustrative of innovative practices that appear promising and derive from an understanding of the nature of the challenge and the special circumstances and needs of low-income working parents and welfare recipients. Over time, we anticipate that outcome data will become available for some programs that will help to further refine policy and program choices.

Readers may note that most of the program examples come from states that were represented at the meeting; these states were invited to participate because they are among those that have already undertaken efforts to expand opportunities for low-income working individuals to participate in postsecondary education. However, the program and policy examples are by no means exhaustive, and many other promising strategies exist in states and localities and at community colleges and other postsecondary institutions throughout the country.

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We wish to thank all the roundtable participants (see Appendix B for contact information), many of whom provided us with follow-up information. In particular, we wish to thank Jim Jacobs, Macomb Community College; Shauna King-Simms, Kentucky Community and Technical College System; John Lederer, Shoreline Community College; Nan Poppe, Portland Community College; Mike Porter, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Judy Reichle, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office; Theresa Romanovitch, Massachusetts Community Colleges; and Joan Wells, Riverside Community College. We are grateful to Julie Strawn, Center on Law and Social Policy, for both her roundtable participation and her careful and insightful review of this report. We also thank the individual colleges featured in the report, many of which provided us with additional program information.

This report was much improved by input from Robert Ivry, John Wallace, and Dan Bloom (MDRC); and Evelyn Ganzglass, Kristin Conklin, and John Thomasian (NGA Center for Best Practices). Sylvia Newman edited the final report, and the Rowe Design Group designed the cover. Stephanie Cowell did the final word-processing.

The Authors

Executive Summary

Since the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, large numbers of welfare recipients have left welfare for employment. However, much of this employment is low-skilled and provides low pay. It is widely recognized that for welfare recipients and other low-income workers to advance in today's economy, they need to acquire technical skills or postsecondary credentials. While access to and participation in post-secondary education is key to the achievement of long-term self-sufficiency, traditional higher education programs are often ill-suited to working individuals with families.

Recognizing the importance of education and training to career advancement, a number of states, local agencies, and community colleges have adopted innovative program and policy strategies to encourage and support participation in postsecondary education. Recent welfare and workforce development reforms have presented new funding sources and partnerships, as well as some new rules regarding work requirements and participation in education programs.

Policymakers and program administrators at the state, local, and community college level can consider the following options to help welfare recipients and other low-wage workers receive additional education and training:

Under flexible federal welfare reform rules, states can allow welfare recipients and other low-income parents to participate in a combination of work and school, or school alone, while still meeting their work participation rates by

- altering work requirements to include college attendance and work-study placements as "work activities";
- using state maintenance-of-effort funding to suspend federal time limits for cash assistance recipients enrolled in postsecondary programs;
- using state maintenance-of-effort funding outside the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance programs to support low-income parents as full-time students; and
- applying TANF funds to create new forms of tuition assistance, short-term education or training programs, and on- or off-campus support services for low-income working families including current and former welfare recipients.

States, individual public agencies, and colleges can develop new partnerships and coordinate funding streams to serve a broader population of low-income recipients by

- locating workforce development one-stop service centers and welfare agencies on college campuses, and
- strategically combining and leveraging funds to provide postsecondary education and training opportunities for "shared" clients.

States can use TANF or other funds to support colleges' efforts to redesign or develop curricula that allow low-income parents to combine work and school. Colleges can make their programs more responsive to working individuals by

- offering flexible scheduling and instruction at alternative sites (such as those of major employers);
- modularizing programs (in which longer degree programs have been "chunked" into shorter courses that result in credits and build to a credential);
- providing short-term, vocation-oriented programs that can be linked to career pathways and longer-term education and training options;
- granting credit for knowledge gained on the job or from prior learning experiences; and
- creating distance learning instruction.

Financial aid changes at local, state, and federal levels can expand access to postsecondary programs by

- creating new or revising existing need-based financial aid sources that cover part-time or non-degree postsecondary programs;
- combining state programs with aid from other sources (federal, institutional, and public agencies or the private sector) to provide a comprehensive package of support;
- working out agreements between the various aid sources to reduce overlap;
- offering rolling or additional federal Pell grant deadlines; and
- ensuring that state sources of financial aid do not impact eligibility for federal programs, such as Food Stamps and Medicaid.

Colleges can conduct aggressive outreach utilizing private sector marketing strategies and financial incentives to encourage low-income individuals to attend postsecondary programs. Other recruitment strategies include

- offering support services during college orientation or recruitment sessions;
- using current program participants as peer recruiters;
- partnering with other community organizations to expand recruitment efforts; and
- hosting on-campus activities (such as job club meetings), and including entire families during college recruitment or orientation programs, to overcome potential students' negative past educational experiences or apprehensions.

State and local agencies and community colleges can respond to the support service and financial needs of low-income working students in college programs by

- providing academic support services, including tutoring, training, learning disability assessment, and remedial programs that provide a bridge to academic or occupational offerings;
- offering child care, housing, transportation, and mentoring services and providing these supports during evenings and weekends, as well as on weekdays; and
- offering monetary or other incentives, directed at individuals or entire families, to help students complete their programs.

States can require that colleges involve employers as a condition of receiving TANF funds for training programs, to ensure that these programs meet local labor needs. Other methods to encourage employer-college partnerships include

- offering incentives such as training for supervisors or other incumbent employees, and
- providing post-employment job retention services.

States can implement efforts to facilitate institutional or systemic change at the postsecondary level, including

- reforming college financing systems to create stable funding sources for innovative short-term training programs;
- exploring new sources of federal or state-level funding;
- developing collaborations between new partners for postsecondary programs; and
- ensuring that program rules and reporting requirements for multiple funding sources are not in conflict with one another.

I. Background

The rapidly changing technology, increased competition, service orientation, and globalization of markets of the last 10 years will be even more marked in the next 10 years. As employment shifts toward high-skilled and knowledge-intense jobs, this "new economy" will place a premium on knowledge and skills. Economists estimate that by 2006, close to two-thirds of all jobs will require education and skills levels beyond a high school diploma.[1] The labor market will further be challenged by the tremendous turnover that will occur as significant numbers of baby boomers begin to retire. While job growth will also occur in lower-skilled service occupations, the wage gap between upper and lower skills levels is expected to grow and wages at the lower end will likely continue to be insufficient to support a family.

In our current economy, many families are poor despite having a significant attachment to the labor force. In 1999, in 57 percent of low-income families with children an adult worked full time and in 20 percent an adult worked at least half-time.[2] While record numbers of welfare recipients have moved into employment since the enactment of welfare reform legislation in 1996, these individuals are generally in low-skill, low-wage jobs, joining the ranks of the "working poor." One analysis of families leaving welfare found that the median wage for former recipients who were working was $6.61 hour.[3] Moreover, without significant wage increases, working full time at a low wage does not lead to long-term economic well-being. Economic projections show that even if all able-bodied adult members of working poor families worked full time, 80 percent of these families would still be in the low-income category.[4]

While higher skills and levels of educational attainment are correlated with higher earnings, adults in low-income families and welfare recipients typically have low levels of education. In 1996, about 22 percent of heads of households in working low-income families had less than a high school education and close to 46 percent had no more than a high school diploma or GED. Only 10 percent were college graduates. In contrast, 36 percent of heads of households in families with incomes above 200 percent of poverty were college graduates.[5]

For low-income families in particular, access to and participation in postsecondary education and training will be key to the achievement of long-term economic self-sufficiency. One study estimated that for welfare recipients with basic skills equal to a high school diploma, an additional 200 hours of education and training (equivalent to a semester of courses) could lead to

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[1]Anthony P. Carnavale and Donna M. Desrochers, *Getting Down to Business: Matching Welfare Recipients' Skills to Jobs That Train*, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ, 1999, p. 7.

[2]Low-income, low-wage workers are defined in this study as those whose incomes are under 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Ed Lazere, Shawn Fremstad, and Heidi Goldberg, *States and Counties Are Taking Steps to Help Low-Income Families Make Ends Meet and Move Up the Economic Ladder*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, DC, November 27, 2000, p. 2.

[3]Pamela Loprest, *Families Who Left Welfare: Who Are They and How Are They Doing?* Urban Institute, Washington, DC, 1999.

[4]Gregory Acs, Katherin Ross Phillips, and Daniel McKenzie, *On the Bottom Rung: A Profile of Americans in Low-Income Working Families*, Urban Institute, Washington, DC, October 2000, p. 1.

[5]Acs, Phillips, and McKenzie, p. 3.

jobs that pay $5,000 to $10,000 more.[6] Further, labor market research suggests that there is an economic payoff to postsecondary credentials for low-income families. Men with an associate's degree earned 18 percent more than high school graduates and women earned 23 percent more.[7] Attaining a bachelor's degree or graduate credentials is correlated with even higher economic payoffs. Another study found that men with bachelor's degrees earned 28 percent more annually and women 39 percent more than their counterparts with only high school diplomas.[8]

Postsecondary education or training may not be the wage-progression solution for all low-income workers. It does require certain basic skills levels and often other prerequisites (such as a high school diploma or GED); and while some colleges offer developmental (remedial) courses, such approaches may be inadequate to address major basic skills deficits or may not provide a sufficient "bridge" to occupational or academic coursework. States and localities are currently grappling with alternative strategies to serve populations with very low grade levels, poor literacy, learning disabilities, or other academic issues. These individuals may need more intensive or specialized basic skills and education programs before being ready for postsecondary education. This report focuses on low-wage workers who are already prepared for postsecondary programs or who could participate with some developmental education or other academic supports.

A. Postsecondary Education Access and Retention Barriers

Despite the need for skills upgrading and postsecondary credentials in the current economy, low-wage workers and welfare recipients have generally been underrepresented in postsecondary education. Moreover, those who do attend classes often have difficulty in completing the program. Research on the characteristics of dropouts suggests that many noncompleters share characteristics of low-wage workers: enrollment as a part-time student, working full time, belonging to an ethnic minority, poor school performance, having a family, and financial issues.[9]

Low-wage workers and welfare recipients may face considerable barriers to accessing and completing traditional higher education programs at two- or four-year colleges, because of

- the competing demands of work, family, and school;
- the costs associated with pursuing a postsecondary education — particularly when considering forgone earnings — and insufficient financial aid packages;
- TANF work requirements that may limit participation;
- lack of family or community support for acquiring further education or training;

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[6]Carnevale and Desrochers, p. 10.

[7]W. Norton Grubb, *Learning and Earning in the Middle: The Economic Benefits of Sub-Baccalaureate Education*, Community College Research Center, New York, NY, April 1999, pp. 14-15.

[8]Thomas J. Kane and Cecilia Elena Rouse, "Labor-Market Returns to Two- and Four-Year Colleges," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 85 (3), June 1995, pp. 600-614.

[9]Florence B. Brawer, "Retention-Attrition in the Nineties," *ERIC Digest*, ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 1996.

- lack of knowledge about the benefits of participating in postsecondary education;
- the relatively long-term investment required by credit-granting programs, which may take from one to two years for a certificate to two or more years for an associate's degree and beyond; and
- inadequate access to such support services as child care and transportation.

B. The Policy Context

Having been successful in placing welfare recipients in jobs, states are increasingly turning their attention to helping former recipients remain employed and advance in their careers in order to help promote long-term self-sufficiency and movement out of poverty. States are exploring strategies to help former recipients overcome the barriers to participation in postsecondary education and to receive education and training while they are working so they can attain better jobs and higher wages. Additionally, the interest in helping former recipients succeed has served to stimulate a broader interest in all working poor families — not only those previously on welfare. Both the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provide states and their local partners with new opportunities, as well as challenges, to increase access to education and training for current and former TANF recipients and other low-income workers.

Welfare reform. The federal TANF block grant and state and local welfare reform policies have created both barriers and opportunities for some low-income families receiving public assistance to participate in postsecondary education. Restrictions on what counts toward the work requirements in some states can make attending college difficult. Nonetheless, as initial state concerns about meeting federal work participation rates have subsided, a growing number of states are allowing postsecondary education to count toward the work requirement. As of October 1999, 22 states allowed more than 12 months' participation in postsecondary degree programs to count toward the work requirement, either as a stand-alone activity or in conjunction with work.[10]

Under TANF, states have the flexibility to allow participation in postsecondary education and to use TANF as a source of funding for postsecondary education and training for current and former welfare recipients as well as other individuals in low-income families. States can use, and are using, TANF to fund special postsecondary programs, financial aid, and support services such as child care and transportation. (See textbox 1 for more information on TANF.)

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[10]Mark Greenberg, Julie Strawn, and Lisa Plimpton, "State Opportunities to Provide Access to Postsecondary Education Under TANF," Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC, February 2000, p. 22. Some of these states have done so by creating separate state programs using their maintenance-of-effort (MOE) dollars, but many states have allowed more postsecondary education through the regular TANF program. (MOE dollars are state funds the state must spend as a condition of receiving federal TANF dollars. See textbox 1 for more information on MOE.) Because of the TANF caseload reduction credit, which rewards a state for caseload decline by reducing the federal work participation rate requirement, many states have been able to meet the work rate even while allowing participation in activities that do not count toward the federal work participation rate.

Workforce development. The workforce development policy changes enacted through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) have implications for low-income individuals accessing postsecondary education and training. WIA also has the potential to foster an unprecedented amount of collaboration among postsecondary education, workforce development, welfare, and other public systems through the new service delivery model of the "one-stop" service center. Collaboration and accessing other training dollars may be necessary to provide training to WIA clients as many states have dedicated a substantial amount of their WIA funding to create the infrastructure of the one-stop system.

Like TANF, WIA has a "work first" focus; placing greater emphasis on core services such as skills assessment and job search than on education and training — either pre-employment or post-employment. After receiving core and intensive services, individuals can move on to training only if it is determined that training is necessary for them to obtain stable employment that provides for self-sufficiency.

The act also changed the relationship between workforce development boards, providers including community colleges, and clients with the introduction of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), or vouchers. Whereas in the past, under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), providers could receive training funding on a contract basis, now they must typically compete with other providers for individual students. While WIA eliminated the 90 percent set-aside of funds to serve low-income adults, the law does specify that if funds are insufficient, priority must be given to low-income individuals.

Like welfare reform, WIA presents new opportunities for colleges to serve low-wage workers and other WIA clients. Competition with other training providers may spur colleges to create new services and programs and redesign existing offerings. (See textbox 2 for more information on WIA.)

Policy changes in welfare and workforce development will likely also affect the ways in which colleges attempt to serve nontraditional low-income students. In the past, many colleges attempted to serve welfare recipients and JTPA/WIA clients through a pre-employment model, in which students could attend school full time, complete their studies, and then pursue employment. In the "work first" context, many low-income working parents will be seeking education and training as a part-time activity while they are employed. Colleges are faced with developing new post-employment models of education and training and alternative support services and tuition assistance packages to retain students (particularly low-income single parents who are juggling work and family responsibilities) enrolled in them.

C. Options for Eliminating Barriers and Expanding Opportunities

A number of states, local agencies, and community colleges have moved ahead and adopted strategies to encourage and support participation in education and training. This report describes options for eliminating barriers and expanding opportunities for low-wage workers and welfare recipients to participate and succeed in postsecondary education by

- using TANF flexibility and resources to support participation in postsecondary education;

- developing effective organizational structures and partnerships;
- redesigning programs and curricula to meet the needs of working individuals;
- improving financial aid options;
- increasing motivation for low-income individuals to attend postsecondary programs;
- providing supports and incentives to help individuals succeed in postsecondary education;
- involving employers in designing training programs and promoting career advancement; and
- pursuing strategies to effect institutional or systemic change.

Textbox 1

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant

The sweeping welfare legislation enacted in 1996 (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act) ended the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and created, in its place, the work-focused Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program. Under TANF, states receive a fixed amount of funding each year to provide time-limited cash assistance to needy families and support to help families move into work quickly.* With the reduction in cash assistance caseloads and the movement of recipients into the workforce since the law's enactment, states are redirecting many of their TANF dollars to helping current and former recipients retain employment and advance to better jobs. Under TANF, states can fund a variety of post-employment services including child care, transportation, education and job training, ongoing case management, and mentoring programs. Further, under the law, such services are not limited to current and former welfare recipients. States may also use TANF dollars to serve other needy, low-income families as long as the services provided are consistent with the purposes of the law. Key features of the law include the following:

Time limits. Cash assistance is intended to be provided on a temporary basis: there is a 60-month time limit for the receipt of federal cash assistance. States are permitted to exempt up to 20 percent of their caseload from the time limit and may continue to provide cash benefits funded with state dollars. States may also implement shorter time limits, which can make it difficult for individuals to complete a degree program before assistance ends unless the state creates special exemptions or extensions.

Work participation. Both individuals and states must comply with a number of requirements related to work. Under TANF, states are required to meet annual work participation rates or risk receiving a fiscal penalty. In 1997, TANF required that 25 percent of all families receiving cash assistance participate in work activities for 20 hours a week rising to 50 percent and 30 hours by 2002. (Even more rigorous requirements are set for two-parent families.) Activities that count toward this requirement are specified in the statute and include subsidized and unsubsidized employment, work experience, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness, and community service. Education and training activities count to only a limited degree:

- Vocational educational training may count toward the work rate but no more than 12 months of participation may count for any individual.

*Reducing dependency by helping families transition to work is not the only purpose of the law. Strengthening families, reducing out-of-wedlock births, and encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families are also important goals of the law.

(continued)

Textbox 1 (continued)

Additionally, no more than 30 percent of all individuals counting toward the participation rate can be in vocational educational training or be a parent under age 20 completing high school. States define vocational educational training and can include participation in postsecondary education in the definition.

- If an individual participates in the activities listed above for 20 hours a week, then participation in job skills training directly related to employment and education related to employment or attendance in a secondary school or GED program (for those who do not have a high school diploma or GED) can count toward additional hours of participation. As with vocational educational training, a state can include postsecondary education in its definition of job skills training.

- Separate from the federal work participation rate, recipients are required to "engage in work" (as defined by the state) within 24 months of receiving cash assistance. States have discretion in defining work and can include participation in postsecondary education or other activities, such as substance abuse treatment. Most states require work participation prior to 24 months.

- States are not prohibited from allowing individuals to participate in any other education and training not specified in the federal law. However, participation in these activities will not count toward the work participation rate, except as described above. Owing to the caseload reduction credit, a provision in the law that effectively reduces the work participation rate by giving states credit for caseload decline, states have found it relatively easy to meet the work participation rate for all families. Thus, many states have allowed individuals to participate in a more expansive list of activities (including postsecondary education) and have still managed to meet the work rates.

(continued)

Textbox 1 (continued)

Maintenance-of-effort (MOE) and separate state programs. As a condition of receiving federal TANF funds, states must spend their own funds on welfare programs at a level that is 80 percent of their FY 1994 expenditures on welfare.[†] States may spend their MOE funds segregated within the TANF program or in separate state programs that are consistent with the purposes of the law. Because MOE funds are not subject to all the requirements of federal TANF dollars, states can strategically use MOE funds for special purposes. For example, cash assistance benefits paid for with MOE funds rather than federal TANF dollars are not subject to the 60-month federal time limit on benefits. By using segregated MOE dollars, states can temporarily suspend the time limit for families. A few states have decided to suspend the time limit while individuals are pursuing postsecondary degree programs. Additionally, states can provide cash assistance and other benefits and services in a separate state MOE-funded program. Recipients in these programs would not be subject to the federal time limit or included in the calculation of the work participation rate. Thus, states that are concerned about failure to meet the work rate if they allow participation in postsecondary education could serve these recipients attending college in a separate state program.

[†]The MOE requirement is reduced to 75 percent if a state meets the work participation rates.

II. Using TANF Flexibility and Resources to Support Participation in Postsecondary Education

With its work requirements and time limits on assistance, the TANF block grant is generally oriented toward a "work first" approach. However, states can take advantage of the law's considerable flexibility to provide both pre- and post-employment education and training opportunities. In many states, work requirements permit at least some pre-employment education by recipients. Additionally, TANF can also be used to fund education and training programs for other individuals in low-income working families.

A. Modifying Work Requirements to Allow More Education

While the federal TANF policy requires that cash recipients engage in work activities after 24 months, states define what counts as a work activity and can include postsecondary education in their definition. Also, although not all education activities count toward the federal work participation rate imposed on states, most states have not had difficulty in meeting the work rate and are recognizing that they have some leeway in allowing individuals to participate in education. In 1999, at least seven states adopted new policies, through legislative or executive action, to allow more participation in postsecondary education and training to count toward the work requirement.[11]

States can adjust or remove the work requirement to allow some combination of work and school or full-time school. In 1999, while 13 states did not allow participation in two-year or four-year degree programs to count toward the state's work requirement, 12 states did allow participation for up to 12 months and 22 states did allow participation for more than 12 months. (In four states, the policy is set by the individual counties.) Most states that allow postsecondary education require that it be combined with work.[12] States also have the option to suspend the federal 60-month "time clock" for TANF recipients in school by using state maintenance-of-effort (MOE) funding to provide cash assistance to individuals attending postsecondary programs. (See textbox 1.) Examples of what states can do in terms of their work requirement policies include the following:

- The Parents as Scholars program in *Maine* allows recipients to attend full-time postsecondary two- or four-year degree programs. In the first year, students must participate in a combination of education and training, study, or work-site experience for an average of 20 hours per week. After the first 24 months, participants must make the choice of working 15 hours per week (in addition to school and study time) or combining class hours, study hours, and work for a total of 40 hours per week. Since cash assistance payments to these recipients are funded by MOE dollars in a separate state program, they are not included in the federal work participation rate requirement and their federal time limits are suspended. (See http://janus.state.me.us/dhs/bfi/pas.htm for more information.)

[11]Greenberg, Strawn, and Plimpton, p. 23.

[12]Greenberg, Strawn, and Plimpton, p. 26.

- *Illinois,* through an executive order of the governor, allows TANF recipients to attend full-time two- and four-year degree programs, and time spent in education does not count against the federal time limit, as long as they maintain a 2.5 grade point average. Cash assistance to these students is funded with state MOE dollars within the TANF cash assistance program.

- In *Kentucky,* TANF recipients can participate in up to 24 months of full-time education without a work requirement. After that time, students must combine education with work.

- *Michigan* offers two work requirement education options: (1) a partial requirement, the 10/10/10 option, in which students can combine 10 hours each of school, study, and work per week; or (2) the short-term intensive career training option, in which the work requirement is waived for up to six months for students participating in specific short-term training programs.

- *Iowa* allows 24 of 36 months of assistance to be spent in postsecondary education and to count toward the state's work requirement.

States may also permit time spent in a work-study placement to count toward the work requirement, and even disregard work-study income in determining TANF payments as California, Kentucky, and Massachusetts have done.

B. Assisting Former Recipients and Other Low-Income Families

With the flexibility allowed under federal guidelines, states can also expand TANF programs and services to former recipients, who often are working in low-wage jobs and may need further education to reach their career advancement goals. This same flexibility allows states to reach out to a population, including low-income workers and their families, broader than only current or former cash assistance recipients. For example, states can use TANF funds to provide scholarships or cover tuition costs, fund on-campus support programs such as counseling and mentoring, pay for the costs of designing and conducting special training or education programs, and pay for child care and transportation to assist individuals in low-income families who may never have received welfare.

- *Massachusetts* colleges can serve former recipients for up to one year. They can provide post-employment services to encourage job retention and support including transitional supports, case management and counseling, and basic skills and employer-based training.

- *Washington* provides TANF-funded tuition assistance at any of the 34 community or technical colleges across the state for current and former recipients and other low-income parents with incomes up to 175 percent of the federal poverty level.

Additional examples of how states are using TANF to serve a broader low-income population are provided throughout the report.

Textbox 2

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 revised federal laws regarding job training, adult education and literacy programs, and vocational rehabilitation programs, replacing them with streamlined and more flexible components. While the programs remain as individual programs, a major emphasis of the legislation is to improve coordination between these and other related systems. Title I replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs with a redesigned workforce system that will provide universal access to services through a one-stop system designed and overseen by local workforce investment boards. The restructuring of the workforce system presents both challenges and opportunities for serving low-income individuals and providing them with access to education and training. Key features related to workforce development include the following:*

State and local planning. A newly formulated state workforce investment board, appointed by the governor and with a majority of seats held by private employers, will have broad authority to guide development of a state's workforce investment system and develop the state's plan. Local workforce investment boards (similar to the Private Industry Councils), also with a majority from the private sector, will work in partnership with local elected officials to design and oversee job training programs for adults, youth, and dislocated workers; determine how their programs will be coordinated with other employment-related programs; and establish the one-stop delivery system. The state may elect to develop a unified state plan integrating planning for up to 15 federal workforce development programs.

Universal access through a one-stop system. The local partnership will establish a one-stop delivery system through which any citizen may look for a job, explore work preparation and career development services, and access a range of employment, training, and adult and occupational education programs that are required to offer their services through one-stop centers or related electronic systems. At least a dozen federal programs are mandatory one-stop partners; TANF is not one of them, although some states and localities are including welfare agencies as partners. Community colleges that receive Perkins vocational education funds or adult education and literacy funds are mandatory one-stop partners.

*For a more detailed description, see "Workforce Investment Act of 1998: Summary and Description of Final Compromise," National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Washington, DC, August 1998 (at http://www.nga.org/Workforce/SummaryHR1385.htm).

(continued)

Textbox 2 (continued)

Services and sequential eligibility. Services available at the local level include core services, intensive services, and training services. Before being eligible to receive training services, individuals must receive at least one core service (initial assessment of skills and needs; job search and job placement; information on training providers, support services, and unemployment compensation) and one intensive service (in-depth assessment, career planning, job readiness, and case management). After receiving core and intensive services, individuals can move on to training if training is necessary for them to obtain stable employment that provides for self-sufficiency. There is no minimum amount of time that must pass before individuals can begin receiving training services.

Individual Training Accounts. The law requires the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) (or vouchers) to pay for training of eligible workers by certified providers. Direct contracts with certified providers are allowed only in limited circumstances: for on-the-job and customized training, for training services outside the local workforce investment areas, and for training offered by community-based organizations or other private organizations that serve populations with special needs.

The ITAs are intended to enhance consumer choice and allow participants a greater voice in their training decisions. However, vouchers, as opposed to contracts, make it more difficult for providers to estimate in advance the training funds they may receive, but they may also improve program quality through increased competition. All providers must be certified by the state based on performance outcome measures.

Targeting to low-income individuals. The law eliminated the set-aside in JTPA that required 90 percent of the funds for adults to go to low-income individuals. Instead, the law states that if funds are insufficient or "limited" in any local area, priority for intensive and training services must be given to low-income individuals. Because WIA funds must be used to develop and administer the new one-stop system, there is some concern that fewer funds will be available for training than were in the past, thus making coordination with other programs even more imperative.

III. Developing New Partnerships to Improve Service Delivery

In some instances TANF funds may not be appropriate or available for funding education initiatives. By developing collaborations across TANF, workforce development, and education agencies, funds can be leveraged to provide a broader array of programs and services and to reach a greater number of clients. (See Appendix A for a discussion of additional funding sources.)

A. Merging Funds, Partnering, and Co-Location

States can serve a broader population by merging funding streams.

- *Utah* demonstrated how it is possible to integrate TANF and WIA funds by merging its welfare and workforce development systems in 1997.
- *Florida* more recently integrated TANF and WIA funds to provide education and training to individuals whose incomes are up to 200 percent of poverty through the recent Workforce Innovation Act, CS/SB 2050. Under this recently enacted legislation, state welfare-to-work and workforce development agencies and services were merged. (See www.workforceflorida.com for more information.)

On a smaller scale, agencies can partner and co-fund ventures to assist low-income families to access and complete postsecondary programs:

- In *Illinois*, the state Community College Board and the Department of Human Services partnered to create the Advancing Opportunities program to foster job retention and career advancement, offering both pre- and post-employment services to current and former TANF recipients enrolled in education and training programs. (See www.state.il.us/agency/dhs/tsconp.html#v for more information.)

Co-location is another method for improving service delivery. Workforce development one-stop service centers and TANF agencies can be placed on-site at colleges to allow for greater collaboration:

- In *Iowa*, many community colleges are the administrative entity for workforce development, and in *North Carolina* JobLinks one-stop service centers are often located on community college campuses.
- *Montana* offers "virtual" one-stop services via campus-based computers.
- In *Oregon*, some welfare offices are located on community college campuses, and some colleges are the prime contractor for TANF employment and training services, serving as the local one-stop center.

B. Using the One-Stop System Strategically

In general, states can use one-stop systems under WIA to provide a variety of employment and training services. Agencies working through the one-stop systems can work together to

combine their funds and leverage others to help individuals establish a personal development plan that identifies skill and career development pathways. Within the one-stop systems, core services (job search and job matching) can be provided by the job service using federal funds under the Wagner-Peyser Act. More intensive services (testing, assessment, needs analysis, eligibility for training, career counseling, and so on) can be provided at one-stop centers funded with TANF and WIA funds.

- *Utah* uses TANF, rather than WIA, funds to support occupational education and training in its one-stop centers.

- In *Florida,* 50 percent of WIA funding for adult and dislocated worker programs must be spent through Individual Training Accounts (or vouchers), which funnel resources only to certified programs providing training for WIA- and TANF-eligible individuals.

Some colleges have adopted a one-stop model of their own, co-locating all their employment and student support services, including services for special student populations (for example, TANF recipients), at one easily accessible campus location. Public agencies in some communities also outstation TANF caseworkers at these college service centers. Colleges are able to serve a broader range of students by blending their public and private funding streams through such centers. For example:

- *Cabrillo College,* in *Santa Cruz County, California,* serves TANF, WIA, and other students through the college's Fast Track to Work office. This service center provides eligibility workers from the county Human Resources (TANF) Agency, information about available financial aid, child care subsidies and work-study opportunities for TANF students, career planning and work readiness services, soft skills training, academic and tutorial support, personal counseling, and assistance with enrollment. The Fast Track program is funded largely by the Chancellor's Office CalWORKs program, which serves TANF recipients enrolled in the community college system.[13] (See www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/instruct/fttw for more information.)

IV. Redesigning Programs and Curricula to Meet the Needs of Working Individuals

Traditional postsecondary education programs operate on a semester or quarter calendar, schedule the majority of classes during the day, and sequence courses for continuous enrollment until completion. Unfortunately, this traditional programming can create a barrier to participation for low-income working individuals who have limited ability to partake in long-term, continuous coursework owing to family commitments and responsibilities, work schedules that change frequently, and — for TANF recipients — program limitations on education participation. More-

[13]The Chancellor's Office CalWORKs program is primarily funded with state general fund dollars and, to lesser extent, with state TANF dollars. All these funds count as state MOE dollars under welfare reform.

over, some are discouraged from enrolling because certificates and degrees are generally awarded only after completion of a long-term program, and students do not receive any credentials along the way. Fortunately, a number of community and technical colleges are adopting alternative and more flexible program, curricula, and schedule models in response to the changing needs of the students in their community.

States can facilitate these efforts by earmarking funds for community colleges to be used to develop or redesign curricula:

- In *Washington*, "surplus" TANF funds were used for the Program Redesign and Delivery program that allocated up to $149,000 to each community college to design shorter classes and training programs, increase evening and weekend offerings, hire and place WorkFirst coordinators on campus, and develop working relationships with business and agency partners.

- In *California*, all 107 community colleges can use part of their Chancellor's Office CalWORKs funds to develop or redesign education and training programs to meet TANF students' needs.

A. Implementing Flexible Scheduling and "Chunk" Programs

Community colleges can explore more flexible scheduling of classes to meet the needs of working individuals, including offering classes on weekends and evenings and holding classes at alternative sites (such as those of major employers).

- *Portland Community College*, in *Oregon*, offers Machine Manufacturing Technology self-paced lab instruction 52 hours per week, including evening and weekend hours. There are no set class times. (See textbox 3 for more information.)

- Within the New Visions program (see page 17 for a program description) at *Riverside Community College*, in *California*, the same class is offered three times per day (12-3, 3-6, and 6-9 P.M.). Participants can attend any of the classes, and they may switch between classes as their schedule requires.

- Students in the Pre-Employment Training program at *Shoreline Community College*, in *Seattle, Washington*, can take classes in office occupations, manufacturing assembly, and health services either on weekday evenings (Monday-Friday, 5-9:30 P.M.) or on long weekends (Friday, 1:30-9:30 P.M., and Saturday and Sunday, 8:30 A.M.-5:00 P.M.).

Another approach is to modularize or "chunk" programs into shorter courses that result in credits and build to a credential. These linked modules can be offered in a number of schedule formats including traditional quarters as well as intense, condensed periods (such as 70 hours over a consecutive two-week period) or spread out over a longer period (such as two full days of classes on five weekends). Students can progress to the next module in an open entry-open exit format when the time is convenient to them. See textbox 3 for an example of a modular, open entry-open exit program.

Textbox 3

Open Entry-Open Exit Machine Manufacturing Technology Program Portland Community College

Portland Community College redesigned its Machine Manufacturing Technology Associate of Applied Science degree and certificate programs to operate on a modularized, open entry-open exit format. Each course is organized around specific "skill sets," and instruction is offered in a variety of formats including directly from lab faculty, and through video or other multimedia, written materials, and lab projects. The lab for the program is open 52 hours per week, including evenings and Saturdays. Students have no set class or lab time — the entire program is flexible and self-paced — and they can start any time during a school term. Because they are working toward a full degree, students can receive financial aid, including Pell grants, to cover tuition expenses.

The program prepares students for a number of entry-level positions, including: machine operators; manual, computer numerical control (CNC), and maintenance machinists; mechanical inspectors; and computer-assisted machining programmers. Some courses require prerequisites, and students must take basic skills assessments for placement purposes. Students are expected to place at an 8th-grade math level or higher, but they can begin course work while simultaneously taking a math remediation course if they place below that level. Students can take courses/modules simultaneously or in sequence.

Program credentials. Incumbent workers who take courses for skills upgrading or career advancement purposes can opt to receive continuing education credits (and the courses completed are considered "modules"), while those students working toward one- or two-year certificates, associate's degrees, or transfer to four-year programs can receive transfer credits for completed courses. Portland also offers interim credentials for completing modules, including CNC operator, mastercam, quality control, and technicians for electronically controlled manufacturing equipment awards.

Curriculum development. Portland Community College faculty worked with local employers and the college's economic development committee to design the program curriculum. Each course involves skills-based activities including reading assignments, practice of skills learned, self-assessment through practice evaluations, lab activities, and final assessments (either written exams or projects). Industry standards are used to establish performance outcomes for each course.

- *Macomb Community College,* in *Clinton Township, Michigan,* offers several programs in which students can get a "mini-certificate" after taking a few courses, a certificate after a year's worth of courses, and, finally, an associate's degree. Programs include Quality Systems Technology and Automotive Technology. (See www.macomb.cc.mi.us for more information.)

- *Shoreline Community College* recently redesigned its information technology program into three quarter-length modules, each leading to a certificate and the final tier leading to an associate's degree.

B. Providing Short-Term Training

Some community colleges offer short-term, vocation-oriented programs that provide an introduction to a particular field and result in entry-level job placement. Students experiencing success in these programs may then be motivated to attain further training.

- Using Program Redesign funds, *Washington* community colleges developed short-term training programs and courses to train call-center specialists, bus drivers, forklift operators, office workers, automotive technicians, and workers in other occupations.

- The Machinist Training Center at *Macomb Community College* offers a 16-week/480-hour course in machining skills that leads to high-demand, entry-level jobs in the metalworking field paying an average starting wage of $10 to $13 an hour. Students receive credits toward an associate's degree in Macomb's program, as well. (See www.macomb.cc.mi.us/Community Development/MTCmainpage.htm.)

- *Riverside Community College,* working in partnership with the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, offers the New Visions program to welfare recipients working at least 20 hours per week. On completion of a 24-week core program of academic remediation and workplace/life skills guidance programming, New Visions students participate in an occupational mini-program for one to five months for which they receive academic credit and certification for entry-level jobs. Occupational areas include nursing, medical technician, early childhood education, corrections, office administration, and manufacturing and construction. The education and training component is bolstered by flexible scheduling, individualized instruction in a group setting, and a highly supportive social environment of peers and teachers.[14] (See www.academic.reed.cc.ca.us/workforce/NewVisions.htm.)

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[14]Abt Associates is conducting a five-year random assignment evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the New Visions program for welfare recipients in encouraging them to return to school after work. They will also look at whether making work a condition of education and training increases motivation to learn and enhances short-run job retention and advancement and whether providing remedial education and support services helps participants succeed in regular college programs. See David J. Fein, Eric Beecroft, David A. Long, and Andrée Rose Catalfamo, *College as a Job Advancement Strategy: An Early Report on the New Visions Self-Sufficiency and Lifelong Learning Project*, Abt Associates Inc., Bethesda, MD, May 2000.
(See http://www.abtassoc.com/reports/education/NV-revised.pdf.)

C. Developing Career Pathways

A promising wage progression and career advancement strategy is to link short-term training to career pathways and longer-term education training options that eventually lead to a certificate or two- or four-year degree. The most promising career pathways illustrate the relationship between levels of training and the employment options they lead to, and allow for exit and re-entry into training programs. These programs are generally provided in a modularized format and with flexible scheduling, focus on growth industries, and are developed in partnership with employers. The Job Ladder Partnership in the Puget Sound area of Washington provides a good example of a career pathways program. (See textbox 4 for more information.)

Other career pathways programs include the following:

- *Portland Community College* has created some career pathway programs, working in partnership with local employers. Under the new entry-level telecommunications program with Qwest, students attend school full time for two terms of telecommunications courses that have been compressed into nontraditional modules. After they take these initial courses and if they pass Qwest's hiring process, students begin working at the company and continue to take the additional six courses they will need for the certificate. Incumbent entry-level employees also have access to the program, and Qwest offers some classes at the worksite, as well as paid internships. Students can continue taking classes toward their associate's degree. The college also has an agreement with the Oregon Institute of Technology for associate's degree graduates to continue on for a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering technology. The bachelor's program is intended for working students, with only three days of classes per week for full-time enrollment. The college has created similar pathway programs with a local one-stop center for health occupations and with high-tech employers for a computer information systems internship program.

- *Massachusetts* community colleges, working with the state's Department of Mental Retardation (DMR), are piloting a project that will create a career pathway for "direct support" workers who are employed at agencies under direct contract with DMR. By creating a new certificate program and awarding college credit for training, the state hopes to raise the professional status of direct support workers and improve DMR's ability to attract and retain qualified and dedicated workers. The project has developed a new Direct Support Certificate program with a curriculum that incorporates DMR mandatory training and national skills standards. Students who attend classes part time (6 hours of instruction and 10 hours of homework per week) for one year can earn a certificate. Individuals who successfully complete the program will be eligible for a $500 bonus and $1,000 pay increase. The certificate program is aligned with and counts toward an associate's degree in human service which can be applied toward a bachelor's degree.

Textbox 4

Job Ladder Partnership
Puget Sound Region

The Job Ladder Partnership is the combined effort of a consortium of six community colleges in the Puget Sound region: Shoreline, Edmonds, Cascadia, Lake Washington, Bellevue, and Green River. Students work with counselors to choose one of four career pathways offered by one or more of the partner colleges: manufacturing, customer relations, health services, and information technology. These pathways are not linked to a particular employer or even necessarily to a particular sector. For example, training in customer services or information technology will prepare students for jobs in a wide range of industries. The colleges have, however, identified employer partners for each pathway who offer relatively good entry-level wages.

Pre-employment. Students first participate in a 12-week pre-employment program to connect them with opportunities for future, post-employment training. After initial placement in employment, they can receive additional training either concurrently or sequentially with work at any one of the six partner institutions.

Post-employment retention and upgrade. The state's Work-Based Learning Tuition Assistance funds job retention and upgrade training for parents with incomes below 175 percent of poverty. The colleges and their partner public agencies provide retention services for pre-employment program graduates. The Job Ladder Partnership is piloting an automated application "passport" system, linked to a database of over 700 training and job opportunities in the four specific career pathways. Together, students and the college retention specialist create "passports" that chart the education and training courses of study that students can pursue, after starting their entry-level position in their pathway of choice. As students begin or complete a step in their pathway (by reaching either education or employment milestones), they receive an "entry or exit visa" as proof of their progress. Shoreline hopes the "passport" acts as a "hook" to keep contact with former students who are now in the workforce, since students may elect to update their passports as they continue along their planned pathways.

D. Offering Distance Learning

Distance learning provides education and instruction opportunities using multimedia and technology, including computer-based, interactive courses (CD-ROM) and courses via the Internet or television. Distance learning has also shown promise as a strategy that can provide training through a modularized curriculum, allow students to receive instruction at their convenience, and overcome child care, scheduling, access, and distance barriers. On the other hand, participation in distance learning requires greater self-motivation and discipline by students and may not be suitable for everyone. Some programs are combining distance learning with on-campus activities including classroom instruction, e-mail or other access to instructors, and mentoring programs to help students succeed. Colleges will also need to ensure that low-wage workers have access to computers. They may want to establish computer-leasing programs, seek donations of computers from local businesses, or recycle used computers.

While many distance learning programs are not targeted to low-income populations, they do offer examples of strategies that can help welfare recipients or other low-wage workers succeed:

- *Portland Community College* found that student retention was higher when distance learning was integrated with classroom instruction and opportunities for students to interact in person with their teacher.
- Distance learning programs at the *University of Phoenix* provide support to students through e-mail, counseling, and get-togethers.
- *Shoreline Community College* is piloting a distance learning project called Learn@Home, which selected 15 low-income working parents through a competitive application process to enroll in distance learning courses. The college gives workers a computer to use at home; they get to keep it if they complete their learning objectives, which include 50 hours of instruction and/or 5 college credits. Participants attend orientation workshops on how to be an effective distance learner, computer basics, and care and maintenance of computers, and they check in weekly with a "retention specialist."
- *Metropolitan Community College,* in *Omaha, Nebraska,* uses a variety of delivery methods in its Alternative Learning Solutions program, including online credit and non-credit courses; online mixed mode, which includes 3-5 campus meetings per 14-week term; and interactive or live TV courses, which are broadcast to four college locations and other off-campus sites. Online credit courses are offered in accounting, nursing, computer programming, and microcomputer technology. (See www.mcneb.edu/pr/als.htm for more information.)

As state and local agencies, community colleges, and other education and training providers begin to offer programs using alternative schedules and nontraditional formats, they must keep in mind the importance of ensuring that participants have access to supports such as child care and transportation during these times. Program restructuring will also require that community college personnel work nontraditional schedules, which might raise some concerns with em-

ployee unions. States may want to consider offering a pay supplement or bonus to teachers willing to teach in these programs.

E. Creating Skills-Based Credentials

The postsecondary education system is beginning to acknowledge that many individuals are receiving valuable occupational training on the job that could be translated into postsecondary credits leading to a certificate or degree after completion of additional training, following the example of competency-based training programs offered by the workforce development system. By receiving credentials for skills and competencies gained on the job or through workplace training programs, individuals can more quickly earn a certificate or degree. This may help to improve degree completion rates for working individuals who have limited time to spend in the classroom. A number of colleges are also moving toward skills- and competency-based designs for the courses they offer — particularly for professional and technical programs. Certificates and degrees are awarded based on demonstrated skills rather than course completion, credits, and attendance rates. Developing skills-based credentials that are based on industry skills standards increases the legitimacy of the credential among employers.

- The *Shoreline Community College* Information Technology Education program is developing a computer-based assessment system that will give students credit for prior skills and knowledge so that they can take only the classes they need to receive a certificate or degree.

- Students in the *Macomb Community College* Credit for Prior Learning program may receive up to 17 semester hours of credit for experience-based learning. Students develop a portfolio — a documentation of personal and professional experiences — which is reviewed by a faculty "assessor" to determine whether the learning acquired can translate into academic credit. (See www.Macomb.cc.mi.us/academics/priorlearning.htm for more information.)

- The *Washington* WorkFirst Pre-Employment Training programs are totally skills-based, and passing each course requires demonstrating a 70 percent proficiency rating on employer-defined and developed skill competencies. (See http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intranetecdev/course3.htm for skill competency lists for the programs.)

- *Cabrillo College* worked with local education and training providers and employers through the local Career Ladders Project to create a county-wide Computer Proficiencies Certificate. Testing for the certificate is now offered free of charge in seven locations throughout the county, including the Cabrillo campus. To obtain the certificate, students must pass a test demonstrating basic skills in Microsoft Windows, Word, and Excel, and the Internet.

V. Improving Financial Aid Options for Welfare Recipients and Other Low-Income Workers

Many existing federal, state, and college financial aid programs are of limited value to welfare recipients and low-income working individuals. While many new federal and state tuition assistance programs for two- and four-year programs have been created in recent years, such as the federal HOPE and Lifetime Learning tax credits and state college savings and prepaid tuition plans, these programs have tended to benefit individuals from middle- and upper-income families. Low-income families with little, if any, income tax liability will reap little benefit from these nonrefundable tax credits and such families may not be able to afford to set aside savings or prepay tuition. And while grants and scholarships (such as Pell grants) were originally intended to make college accessible for low-income individuals, aid that is not based on financial need (such as grants for merit or to encourage entry into specific fields) is now growing at a more rapid pace than need-based aid. As a result, more and more low-income students are utilizing loans, which may create financial hardship down the road when payments are due. Moreover, research has found that loans are negatively correlated with persistence in education and attaining a degree.[15]

In addition to the issues outlined above, welfare recipients and low-income working individuals, particularly those desiring to attend school part time or participate in non-credit programs, face the following barriers to receiving assistance:

- Most financial aid programs do not support students in non-credit or non-degree programs or students who do not attend school continuously, but move into and out of the system.
- Many financial aid programs are geared toward full-time or half-time enrollees, and students attending less than half-time (that is, one course per semester) may not even be eligible. While less-than-half-time students are eligible for Pell grants (the largest federal need-based scholarship program), college financial aid offices sometimes seem reluctant to invest the time in processing grants for these students.
- Many potential low-income students have previously defaulted on student loans, making them ineligible for many types of aid.
- Many financial aid programs cover only tuition and related expenses. Students who have to reduce work hours to attend college while continuing to support their family will likely need additional support for living expenses, child care, and transportation, which are often not covered by financial aid programs.
- Some programs that are intended to support low-income students actually work at cross-purposes with each other. For example, individuals' income

[15]For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Jamie P. Merisotis and Jessica M. Shedd, "The Student Financing Equation: What We Know About the Success of Financial Strategies to Increase Access to Higher Education in the United States," Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, DC, 1999 (www.ihep.com).

from state-funded work-study programs income is counted in determining eligibility for Food Stamps and Medicaid. (Federal work-study income is exempt.)

Recognizing these issues, a number of states and colleges have begun to re-examine how they can better support the participation of low-income working individuals and welfare recipients in their pursuit of education and training for career advancement. They are developing programs targeted to low-income families, combining resources to provide more comprehensive assistance, and providing support to part-time and non-degree students. These efforts may help postsecondary providers move closer to reaching some of their own institutional goals such as increasing the diversity of the student population and supporting the community in which they are located.

A. Providing More Need-Based Funding for Low-Income Individuals

Tuition at four-year colleges and universities can be very costly while community college tuition, though varying widely across states, is usually much lower. In some states, community college tuition rates may be so low that college is practically free for some students who are receiving federal aid. In California, for example, community college courses cost $13 per credit unit in tuition. Regardless of the tuition costs in a state, there are numerous other financial barriers to attending college for low-income students, including the costs of books, tools, and other related expenses. As a result, increasing the availability of need-based funding continues to be an important issue. States can sponsor their own forms of need-based tuition assistance (funded by TANF, MOE, or other sources, such as general revenue or lottery proceeds).

- The Community College Access Grant program in *Massachusetts* pays full tuition and fees for students with family income below approximately $36,000 enrolled in full-time associate's degree programs. On completion of an associate's degree, these students are granted automatic admission into a state university or college, so long as they graduated with at least a 2.5 grade point average, through the state's Joint Admissions program. Joint Admissions students and other four-year college students may be eligible for the state's Tuition Advantage program, which offers a 33 percent reduction in tuition costs for up to two years, so long as students maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA. (See www.masscc.org/tuition.html for more information.)

At least 30 states allow for the creation of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) in their welfare plans. IDAs are matched savings accounts to help low-income families accumulate modest assets over a one- to four-year period to be invested in education or job training, homeownership, and/or micro-enterprise. Individuals contribute monthly to the account; their savings are matched by state government, churches, financial institutions, and/or foundations, with matches sometimes as generous as four to one. While the reported number of accounts is currently small, federally funded demonstrations under the 1998 Assets for Independence Act and growing foundation support suggest that the number may grow exponentially.[16] Early results of

[16]Ami Nagle, "Building a Nest Egg: Individual Development Accounts to Help Michigan Families Achieve Their Dreams," @mott.now, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Vol. 3, No. 4, Flint, MI, September 2000, p. 7.

an evaluation of 13 sites with IDAs found that families typically accumulate resources of about $100 a month; thus, a year or two's worth of matched savings could make a significant contribution to funding tuition expenses. (See the Corporation for Enterprise Development, at www.cfed.org, for more information.)[17]

- *Michigan* recently initiated the Michigan IDA partnership with the Council of Michigan Foundations, the Mott Foundation, and the Family Independence Agency — the state's welfare reform agency — creating a $10 million pool of funds to help at least 2,000 families establish IDAs.

B. Combining Funding Sources to Create a More Comprehensive Assistance Package

Federal, state, and institutional student financial aid as well as funding from the welfare and workforce development systems and the private sector can be combined to provide a complete package of benefits for students. This is especially important to students who are working only part time (or for those who are not working at all), who may have their tuition needs met but cannot meet their living expenses on their own. One strategy recommended at the roundtable was to work out agreements among the various sources of aid to reduce overlap in terms of the specific education-related costs covered by each source (tuition, books, support services, living stipends, and so on). The various financial aid entities can also articulate agreements in some cases so that one source of financial aid does not count as income toward eligibility requirements for other sources of aid.

- *Maine* worked out a plan with colleges in which the TANF Parents as Scholars program uses MOE funds to cover living stipends, housing, transportation, and support services while college financial aid covers tuition and books, permitting students to potentially receive aid from both sources.

- *California* has been successful in combining state work-study funds for TANF students with employer contributions, through the state's "75/25" Work-Study program, in which employers must pay at least 25 percent of students' off-campus work-study wages. (The college covers the rest with the "75/25" state work-study funds.) *Kentucky* also has a work-study program funded with TANF dollars. Both California and Kentucky exclude work-study earnings from income when determining TANF eligibility. These states have found distinct advantages to creating state work-study programs for TANF or other low-income students, since federal work-study slots are limited to non-profit employers. State work-study placements can include for-profit employers, allowing colleges a wider range of work experiences to offer their students. However, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and other federal programs disregard federal work-study income but do not disregard state-created work-study income.

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[17]Nagle, p. 6.

Colleges should be encouraged to make full use of existing funding sources. Likewise, they should be aware of and take full advantage of employer tuition reimbursements, some of which can be quite generous.

- Many colleges could facilitate the award of Pell grants to students taking as few as three credit hours, for example, but currently do not. These grant awards may be relatively small, which is why colleges are reluctant to pursue them for students, but they may prove helpful to low-income families in conjunction with other aid sources.

- The United Parcel Service (UPS) offers a combination of reimbursement and loan packages of up to $23,000 over four years of college for its part-time employees. (See www.telserve.com/Upsx/Ad.html for program specifics.)

- A new source of federal funding has been made available through the Department of Labor H-1B Visa program to temporarily fill high-skilled labor shortages with foreign employees. Funds from employer contributions for each visa issued are being used to provide scholarships in high-growth fields (computer science, mathematics, and engineering) through the National Science Foundation: $27 million was available in 2000 to support scholarships of up to $2,500 per full-time student at community colleges, four-year colleges, and graduate schools. Awards are made to the educational institution, and colleges distribute scholarships based on Pell grant criteria.

C. Providing Support to Part-Time or Non-Degree Students

Many states provide some form of assistance to supplement federal financial aid programs, but these efforts usually focus on full-time two- to four-year degree programs. Several states have developed tuition assistance for part-time students, those enrolled in non-degree and certificate programs, or even in short-term training:

- Work-Based Learning Tuition Assistance in *Washington* is a state assistance program for working parents interested in job training, funded by TANF "caseload reduction" dollars. Colleges provide tuition assistance (including books and fees) to eligible individuals in any job-related vocational training or continuing education program for credit or non-credit coursework. (Usually assistance is available only for post-employment programs, but some exceptions make pre-employment training possible as well.) To be eligible, individuals must have a child and be TANF-eligible or have family income at or below 175 percent of poverty. The work requirements attached to the assistance differ depending on whether or not students are cash assistance recipients. In some cases, the tuition assistance program provides stopgap assistance until students become eligible for federal or other state financial aid.

- *Florida* uses TANF funds to provide Retention Incentive Training Accounts (RITAs) to TANF participants who have become employed. These RITAs can be used for job retention and advancement, including tuition, fees, educational materials, transportation, child care, and other costs. Regional workforce

boards determine the list of postsecondary programs and courses appropriate for TANF participants. The RITAs are expected to complement the ITAs created under WIA.

- The pilot GOALS program in *Jacksonville, Florida,* offers former welfare recipients who are currently low-wage workers a $150 a week stipend and support services so that they can attend short-term education or training programs for up to 16 weeks. The local workforce investment board runs the program, which is supported with TANF funds.

- In a pilot program in *Texas*, former TANF recipients can receive $200 a month for one year to promote post-employment activities that support employment retention or advancement, so long as they remain employed at least 15 hours per week. Working participants can engage in postsecondary education and training as a retention or advancement activity. These stipends do not count toward Food Stamp or Medicaid eligibility. Both the Texas and Florida pilots are being evaluated as part of an ongoing federal research project: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Employment, Retention and Advancement Project.

- One of the unique features of the HOPE scholarship program in *Georgia* is that students enrolled less than full time, and those enrolled full time, in certificate and diploma programs are as eligible for support as students seeking traditional two- and four-year degrees. Georgia uses proceeds from the Georgia Lottery to fund its HOPE scholarship program, which pays for tuition, fees, and books at Georgia public colleges, universities, and technical institutes and provides $3,000 scholarships for students attending private Georgia institutions.[18] To be eligible, students enrolled in degree programs must have completed high school with a B average and maintain a B average while in the degree program. Students pursuing certificate programs at public technical institutes do not need a B average for entry or for maintaining eligibility. (See www.hope.gsfc.org/press_release/hopefaq.cfm for more information.)

D. Considering Revisions to Federal Rules and Regulations

Some changes to existing federal programs that would enable states and colleges to reach more low-income families would have to be achieved through federal legislation. These include:

- permitting rolling (not fixed) deadlines or additional deadlines for federal financial aid programs (many people cannot take advantage of Pell grants, for example, because they apply for college aid after the Pell deadlines have passed);

[18] At private colleges, students must be enrolled full time (12 credit hours) to receive a scholarship, but they do not have to be enrolled full time at public colleges.

- considering revisions to the Pell grant program so that tuition assistance could be provided for one class per semester or for non-credit courses that lead to a recognized certificate;

- modifying Food Stamp and Medicaid rules so that state-level work-study aid or other forms of state financial aid do not count as income for purposes of determining eligibility (currently, only federal work-study income is exempt; states can apply for waivers, but changing federal rules would allow more states to offer their own assistance packages to low-income families without jeopardizing their Food Stamp or Medicaid benefits).

VI. Increasing Motivation for Low-Income Individuals to Attend Postsecondary Programs

Often, innovative and effective college programs, including those that specifically target low-wage workers or TANF recipients, are notoriously undersubscribed. Depending on the local context, empty chairs in college courses have a wide range of causes, such as:

- undeveloped referral relationships with public agencies and community organizations;

- wariness on the part of low-income families about enrolling in education programs owing to bad past experiences with the education system;

- time constraints that pose a problem for working low-income parents, who must already balance demanding work and family obligations;

- family concern about the stigma attached to programs that target welfare recipients or low-income families specifically; and

- recruitment efforts that fail to reach working poor families who may not have contact with the public agencies or community resources that are among colleges' usual referral sources.

Simply offering programs is not enough; community colleges need to develop an aggressive outreach strategy. TANF and WIA and other referring agencies' case management staff will need to understand local rules regarding education and training as well as provide contact information for postsecondary programs available in the community. Many states and localities have begun to address the need to increase knowledge about postsecondary options among TANF and WIA clients, as well as provide incentives to attract larger numbers of low-wage, TANF, and WIA families to college campuses. Roundtable participants shared a number of ways in which their colleges and public systems are trying to reach and convince more low-income families to pursue further education.

Both public agency and college staff need to recognize that timing is critical. Low-income parents who are working after a long period of unemployment, or for the first time, have a host of new time management and job-related pressures to deal with, including balancing their responsi-

bilities to both work and family. Adjusting to the demands of employment may take some time — perhaps 6-12 months after job placement — before an individual may be ready to consider further education/training opportunities.

A logical way to begin efforts to increase demand is to ask customers directly what they want and need to participate. Prior to conducting an intense marketing effort, agencies and colleges can conduct surveys or focus groups with different groups of people (former TANF recipients, former students who did not complete postsecondary programs, and so on) to find out why they are not pursuing college and what incentives would entice them to do so:

- *Riverside County,* in *California,* has hosted focus groups with TANF recipients around recruitment and retention for education and training programs. College and county staff have made program changes in response to focus group findings.

- In 2001, MDRC is launching a study, Opening Doors to Earning Credentials, in order to gather low-wage workers' perspectives about access to and retention in community college programs. Focus groups will be conducted at six community colleges across the country, with three groups of low-wage workers: current community college students, former community college students who left without receiving postsecondary credentials, and potential students who have not pursued postsecondary educations. The perspectives of low-wage workers will be compared with those of college and public agency administrators. The ultimate goal of the study is to identify strategies to increase enrollment and retention of low-wage workers in postsecondary programs. (See http://www.mdrc.org/WorkingPoor/OpeningDoors.htm for more information.)

A. Conducting Aggressive Outreach Efforts

Colleges and public systems have tried a number of creative strategies to reach potential low-income students. They can adopt private sector marketing strategies, such as direct mailings, telemarketing, or advertisements. Another strategy would be to advertise and offer support services (for example, transportation, child care, meals) in conjunction with recruitment and program events, since having these services available can act as both an incentive and often a precondition for low-income parents. Financial or other incentives may also help attract new students to orientation or program events. Rather than relying on college or agency staff to act as recruiters, colleges can use "natural recruiters," including current participants, community-based organizations, and the children of potential students.

TANF agencies in several states and colleges are conducting outreach about postsecondary or other education and training opportunities using private sector marketing strategies. For example:

- *Maine* includes promotional announcements of its Parents as Scholars program when mailing TANF checks.

- The Cabinet for Families and Children in *Kentucky* mails a notice to TANF clients twice a year to inform them about college opportunities. The state's Community and Technical College System also recruits through direct mailings to TANF recipients, presentations at new TANF clients' orientation sessions, and posters and videos available in local welfare offices.

- *Washington State* uses a call center, the Washington Post-Employment Labor Exchange, to inform current and former welfare recipients about available support services and postsecondary education opportunities. The call center operates during evenings and weekends as well as on weekdays. (See www.wa.gov/WORKFIRST/briefing/wplex.html for more information.)

- *Riverside Community College* has utilized a wide range of marketing techniques to attract and recruit TANF recipients to the college's New Visions program, including mailings and advertising on buses, in theaters, in local "Pennysaver" papers, and at local festivals or events.

Both public agencies and colleges should offer support services — including child care, meals, and transportation assistance — so that parents can attend orientation or recruitment sessions. Recruiters also need to make these services known to low-income families through aggressive marketing efforts.

- The *Washington State Community and Technical College* system discovered that whether or not students knew about the availability of evening child care at some campuses influenced their decisions about enrolling in evening programs. Colleges have since started marketing the availability of on-site, evening child care in a variety of ways, including brochures, announcements included with class schedules, local newspapers, and direct mailings to all students registered for evening classes.

Marketing can be enhanced by offering financial incentives for participation in orientations, such as small stipends, gift certificates, coupons, or other rewards. A combination of incentives can also be offered. For example:

- *Riverside Community College* hosts parties for entire families on weekends, offering door prizes and $5 phone cards, in conjunction with recruitment presentations for the college's New Visions short-term post-employment education and training program for TANF recipients. The college has also experimented with holding raffles and offering enrichment activities for children as incentives to attend the recruitment sessions.

Alumni associations and current program participants are good sources of natural recruiters who can conduct outreach, since potential students may relate better to their peers than to college staff:

- *Riverside Community College* hires current students to conduct outreach at a variety of local sites and seeks student input into what sites would be best for

recruitment (such as health clinics or laundromats). Colleges may want to consider using some work-study slots for this purpose.

Public agencies and colleges can also develop new partnerships to cultivate natural recruiters. Community-based organizations (CBOs) can advocate for postsecondary education to recipients, as well as help reach potential students before job placement occurs, and allow colleges to reach populations they may not have been able to reach previously.

- The Cabinet for Families and Children in *Kentucky* works with a CBO to both serve and recruit TANF recipients with the most barriers to employment in the Eastern Appalachian region.

In general, recruiters should look for potential students in likely places — for example, Medicaid and Food Stamp recertification sites. State and local examples of other natural recruiters include the following:

- *Riverside Community College* has been able to reach low-income families through programs run in conjunction with local school districts and county welfare and economic development agencies, and it plans to establish recruiting connections with the county's one-stop system. *Evergreen Valley College*, also in California, hosts barbecues, parties, and other events at local elementary schools, fairs, and churches.

- *Oregon* recruiters contacted parents when they picked up their children from child care.

Employers can also be a way to reach large groups of low-wage workers, and colleges or public agencies can recruit low-wage workers for education programs through presentations on the job site or through customized training programs.

B. Fostering Stronger Attachment to Postsecondary Education Institutions

Low-wage workers or TANF recipients who have had negative education experiences in the past are likely to be wary of postsecondary programs, but colleges and referring agencies can adopt methods to give potential college students positive experiences so that they view the college campus as a supportive environment. Even those students who do not view education in a negative light may be apprehensive about attending postsecondary programs, and developing a connection with a college before starting a program may alleviate their fears.

One successful method is to familiarize individuals with the college setting prior to enrollment, by having them participate in on-campus activities. In order to reach TANF recipients or applicants, agencies can include a visit to a local college as part of job club activities.

- The *Kentucky Community and Technical College System* has offered a variety of orientations to postsecondary education for TANF recipients at local college campuses, ranging in length from one day to eight weeks. These sessions not only offer information about college programs, admissions procedures, and financial aid options, but also allow TANF clients to take a learning styles inventory and participate in a self-directed career search. *Maysville Commu-*

nity College (www.maycc.kctcs.net) offers the longest orientation, eight weeks during the summer, in which participants are able to work on improving their basic skills in addition to traditional orientation activities.

These or other activities can also include the entire family, allowing parents and children to participate together or in separate programs.

- *Portland Community College* offers Saturday computer literacy classes for the whole family, with a variety of support services, as well as separate enrichment activities for children, such as their Mad Scientists Club, during parents' programs.

One key to successful recruitment may be to expose people to community college opportunities at an early point, such as during pre-employment programs. Welfare or workforce development programs can provide information on the value of lifelong learning and further skills training for future career advancement and wage progression. Likewise, pre-employment programs should involve developing career advancement plans with recipients, even prior to their finding a job.

Another way for colleges to enhance their recruitment and retention efforts is to integrate local services, locating welfare offices, one-stop centers, job clubs, and other services on campus. (See Section III on developing effective organizational structures and collaborations among agencies for examples of campus-based one-stop centers and other integrated local service models.)

C. Other Issues for TANF, Workforce Development, and College Staff to Consider

Frontline staff at welfare and workforce development agencies need to fully understand their local rules governing postsecondary education participation so that they can advise their caseloads accordingly and clarify any confusing message they may have received about participating in education and training programs and meeting work requirements. They should also understand the payoff from completing a degree or certificate program and obtaining postsecondary credentials. Administrators may want to offer continuing education opportunities for staff who lack college credentials.

VII. Providing Supports and Incentives to Help Individuals Succeed in Postsecondary Education

Many of the same barriers — including the competing demands of family, work, and school — that might deter low-income families from attending college will likely also prevent them from completing college programs. In general, community colleges have low completion rates for regular degree programs and low-income students may require additional supports and incentives to obtain whatever credentials they are pursuing.

A. Providing Academic Support Services

Some students will require academic supports, such as tutoring or training, to overcome learning disabilities and to address basic skills deficits or limited English proficiency. Often college developmental (remedial) programs operate on completely separate tracks from certificate or degree programs. Colleges can implement curriculum and institutional changes to articulate better connections between these programs (or, ideally, integrate both approaches). Colleges can develop "bridge" programs that provide remediation but are directly linked to higher-level occupational or academic course offerings.

- The Career Ladders project at *Cabrillo College* is joining with multiple education and training providers to pilot a bridge program for welfare recipients and other low-income individuals with very low English proficiency. While Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) programs are available in the community, the vast majority require intermediate- to high-level skills as a prerequisite. The pilot (Partnership for Integrated Language and Occupational Training) has no prerequisite language level and aims to teach students basic English skills in the context of several occupation-specific areas (including medical fields, office work, careers with children, and construction). The goal of the pilot is to prepare students for existing higher-level offerings at the various partner institutions, as well as entry-level work in their fields of choice.

Colleges may develop articulation agreements between short-term non-credit occupational programs and credit-granting occupational programs, to allow students to receive credits toward accredited degree and certificate programs:

- The *Maricopa Community Colleges*, in *Arizona*, may grant credits when graduates of non-credit vocational programs (such as welding, accounting, nursing, or machining) enroll within three years of graduating in credit-granting programs. (See www.gwc.maricopa.edu/msc for more information.)

States and colleges can also work with local vocational rehabilitation agencies, CBOs, and employers to provide accommodations for students with special needs. Some colleges and public agencies have tried to screen for learning disabilities in order to identify student support needs:

- *Shoreline Community College* offers universal Life/Employability Skills Training from the Learning Disabilities Association of Washington to all pre-employment training students and conducts screenings of pre-employment training applicants for learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. The Learning Disabilities Association of Washington assists with screening and referrals to the welfare (Department of Social and Health Services) or workforce development (Workforce Development Council) agency for a more complete assessment. These assessments help students receive accommodations from future employers, under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Finally, Shoreline offers Learning Disabilities Association training for staff in the pre-

employment training program on how to address students' learning disabilities.

- Similarly, *North Carolina* offered training about learning disabilities for community college staff through a Bridges to Practice program run by the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center with a National Institute for Literacy grant. (See www.nclrc.state.nc.us/home/psbridges.htm for more information.)

- *Kentucky* has also conducted training sessions based on the Bridges to Practice model for college campus-based TANF case managers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and TANF-funded mental health clinicians so that they can screen TANF clients for learning disabilities and make appropriate referrals and accommodations.

Colleges and localities can consolidate academic support services to prevent unnecessary duplication. For example, they can ensure that workforce development students have access to existing academic support services for college academic programs on campus, rather than creating separate support systems.

B. Meeting Child Care and Other Support Service Needs

Some students will require child care support while they attend classes. Although many states provide child care support for low-income families and TANF recipients when they are working, many do not provide child care stipends for time that parents spend in further education. Colleges or local agencies can make child care available during evenings and weekends, to accommodate working parents who may need to take classes at times other than during the day owing to their work schedules.

- *Shoreline Community College* has on-site child care during nontraditional hours, for example, through its child care center, which also serves as a practical internship experience for students in the college's child development program. Shoreline, along with 22 other community and technical colleges in the state, receives state TANF funding to offer extended-hour care to students receiving TANF or those with incomes below 225 percent of poverty. The state's community and technical college system is administering the extended-hour program. In addition, the Department of Social and Health Services offers a 15 percent premium to any child care provider willing to offer after-hours care for TANF or other low-income clients.

- Several *Washington* colleges offer weekend child care to correspond to Saturday classes. Two of these colleges also offer school-age programs on Saturdays so that older children can participate in structured activities while their parents take college classes.

Colleges and localities where on-site child care is not an option can also partner with area child care providers to expand their programs.

Students will also likely require other support services, such as assistance with housing, transportation, and counseling.

- In addition to child care, *Massachusetts* offers transportation assistance reimbursements of up to $150 month for TANF recipients in approved education or training programs.

- *Kentucky* has placed Ready to Work coordinators on campuses to aid TANF clients with recruitment and retention issues and help them maintain a good grade point average. The coordinators engage in a host of activities for students, including case management, mentoring, tutoring, advocacy, job development and placement, administering TANF-funded work-study, and facilitating peer support groups. The coordinators are employed by the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, but their positions are funded by TANF dollars. (See www.kctcs.net/student/readytowork.html for program brochures and other information.)

- *California* created a similar program through the community college system, combining state general fund and TANF resources to place CalWORKs coordinators on each college campus. These coordinators serve a similar role to their Kentucky counterparts, but also have been given responsibility for creating or redesigning special instruction programs to serve TANF recipients (including new short-term training options and life skills courses). (See www.cccco.edu/cccco/ss/CalworksHomePage.htm for more information.)

- The Advancing Opportunities program in *Illinois* provides college-based services — including career assessment, personalized case management, support services, and job coaches/mentors — for working TANF recipients enrolled in education and training programs at community colleges.

TANF funding can be used to provide these services, for both current and former TANF recipients, under federal guidelines. One way to bring support services to a larger percentage of low-wage working families is to broaden the population served by TANF agencies beyond those families who receive cash assistance.

- *Montana* and *Oregon*, for example, currently offer child care for families whose incomes are below 185 percent of the poverty level.

- *Illinois* combines state and TANF funding to guarantee child care for families whose incomes are below 50 percent of the state median income.

Under WIA, colleges can also forge similar relationships with their local workforce development boards, to fund new services and case management for workforce development clients.

- In addition to providing tuition for workforce development clients enrolled in community college programs, the local workforce development board has outstationed case managers on the *Macomb Community College* campus to serve

these students. The college and the board can also share student records and database information through their collaboration.

Another means of support for low-income students is to provide mentoring. Schools can use their alumni association to link students with alumni mentors or work with students' employers to pair them with mentors at their worksite. Some colleges and states report that it is critical to provide opportunities for students to support and help one another.

- *Sacramento City College,* in *California,* has piloted the Student Ambassador program, in which TANF work-study students are trained as peer mentors, offering advice to their fellow students and brokering both on- and off-campus services and supports. These ambassadors are located within the college's student services building, but they also roam the campus, providing outreach to students who might not come forward for help on their own initiative.

Another option is to create a "school within a school," thereby creating a peer group that shares common issues and concerns.

- *LaGuardia Community College,* in *Long Island City, New York,* offers the College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment (COPE) program, which provides support services to welfare recipients enrolled in several existing occupational programs that are likely to result in employment on graduation. COPE students have access to regular college services, as well as specialized services, including a tutoring service, job placement and development, counseling, and assistance with welfare issues. (See www.lagcc.cuny.edu/COPE for more information.)

At the same time, supports have to be structured so that they do not stigmatize students. Simply changing the program name may help in this regard.

- *Riverside Community College* named its program New Visions so that participants would not be automatically identified as TANF recipients.

C. Offering Incentives to Students to Attend and Complete Programs

Many states and colleges have experimented with monetary and other incentives to help students complete their programs, offering them interim and/or end-of-program rewards. (Some states and colleges use nonfinancial incentives to attract and retain students as well, including recreation or enrichment activities for children of participants or their entire families.)

- *Kentucky* offers a $250 completion bonus to TANF students who finish high school, GED, degree, or certificate programs.

- The GOALS program in *Florida,* mentioned previously, offers participants $250 cash bonuses for completing short-term education or training programs.

Public agencies and colleges can offer computers for distance learning at home, as well as an incentive to complete education programs:

- The Family Independence Agency in *Michigan* offered refurbished public agency or donated private sector computers to TANF families who completed their summer immersion program, which included computer training. While the Michigan program was not education-focused, community colleges can adopt a similar tactic for low-income students attending their programs.

- As mentioned earlier, the *Shoreline Community College* Learn@Home program allows participants to keep the laptops lent to them if they complete their vocation-related learning objectives.

Finally, colleges should explore developing strong employer partnerships so that students can be assured of related employment in high-growth fields after completing their training programs. Internships, jobs, and work experience offered as part of a course of study with a potential employer can provide tangible evidence of the rewards of program completion to students.

VIII. Involving Employers in Designing Training Programs and Promoting Career Advancement

Educational institutions granting certificates or associate's degrees are typically preparing students from the community for employment in the local labor market. On completion of coursework, students who are not transferring to a four-year program typically seek new or better employment locally rather than relocate, which graduates of baccalaureate programs are expected to do. Because the market is local, strong ties between local employers, public agencies, and community colleges are essential for ensuring that training programs are equipping students with the skills that employers need for existing job openings and that adequate post-employment supports are in place. Given the strong economy and demand for skilled labor, state agencies and community colleges are in a good position to work out arrangements that are mutually beneficial to both workers and employers.

States that provide TANF funding to community colleges to develop training programs can require the involvement of employers as a condition of receiving funds.

- The Self-Sufficiency Fund program in *Texas*, which provides grants for customized training, requires that the training provider, such as a community or technical college, and at least one private employer submit the application to the Texas Workforce Commission jointly.

- Colleges requesting funding from the Pre-employment Training program in *Washington* develop the training programs with employers, who must commit to giving first consideration to hiring those who complete the training.

A. Designing Training to Meet Local Labor Market Needs

Accurate, up-to-date information and ongoing analysis of the local labor market are essential to designing appropriate training programs. Colleges may want to seek the assistance of local or regional economic development and workforce agencies and the chamber of commerce or other business intermediary groups to determine which industries are growing, which firms are

hiring lower-skilled workers, which jobs are going unfilled because of a "skills gap" among job seekers, and which businesses provide advancement opportunities or internal career ladders. Some community colleges employ staff whose job is to link with local employers to design incumbent-worker training programs (such as the Community and Economic Development coordinators at the Kentucky Community and Technical Colleges system) or job placement specialists who outreach to employers on an ongoing basis. These individuals keep up-to-date on local labor needs and also can provide access to local employers. The Center for Community Studies at Macomb Community College conducts an annual economic review and forecast and an annual occupational scan for Macomb County, which is used by the college and the local workforce development board.

Knowledge about the employment prospects and skill demands of the local labor market have helped many community colleges develop ties to specific industries and employers to help ensure that training will lead to job opportunities. While involving specific employers in the design of the training programs is valuable, colleges also want to ensure that the skills being taught are transferable to other employers. Some colleges have been successful in taking a sectoral approach, aggregating the demand of employers from a single sector — often working with an intermediary organization such as a union or trade association. While not all of these initiatives have focused on low-income participants, they offer a promising model.

- In order to meet the growing demand for carpenters and other construction workers in the booming *Sacramento* region of *California, Consumnes River College* partnered with the Building Industry Association to offer a pre-apprenticeship program for the construction trades. CalWORKs recipients receive an introduction to home construction tools, equipment, materials, and techniques as well as learn about basic building, plumbing, and electrical code requirements at the college and at area construction sites. On completion of the 15-week, 32-hour-a-week training program, participants receive a paid employment internship in construction and can apply for the industry's formal apprenticeship program. (See www.crc.losrios.cc.ca.us for more information about the college.)

- *Shoreline Community College* has been particularly successful in working with local automobile dealerships. The Automotive Technology program is offered in partnership with the Puget Sound Auto Dealers Association, which provides critical support in the design and delivery of training services. The program offers a Certificate of Proficiency for students who are interested in working in the parts and service center of an automotive dealership. In the Automotive Business Operations program, students spend time in the classroom, job shadowing, and paid dealership training. The internship gives students an opportunity to integrate their learning and further develop their skills in service technology. The college also offers factory-sponsored training for certified car dealer mechanics with Chrysler, General Motors, Honda, and Toyota, with students spending alternating quarters in class and working at a dealership. (See http://oscar.ctc.edu/shoreline/auto.html for more information.)

- *Macomb Community College* has worked with local auto body design firms to provide customized training for incumbent workers. Entry-level positions created as workers complete training and advance are then filled by cooperative education students, who are generally hired full time on completion of their course of study at Macomb.

Some unions have been active participants in helping to develop training programs and career ladders for low-wage workers.

- In *Philadelphia*, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District 1199C worked with local hospitals, nursing homes, and other health care facilities to create a variety of training and retention and advancement programs funded by a 1.5 percent assessment on gross payroll. They have created an 18-month evening and weekend licensed practical nurse program to help advance certified nurse assistants.

B. Encouraging Employer Involvement

The ability of low-skilled, low-wage individuals to access training and advance to better jobs can be enhanced greatly by hiring and training policies and practices of employers. Thus, public agencies are challenged to provide incentives that will increase employer investment in skills upgrade and training or the hiring of welfare recipients.

- *North Carolina* offers a free supervisory training program, Supervising for Success, for employers who hire welfare recipients.

- The Occupational Training Institute at *De Anza Community College*, in *Cupertino, California*, is using economic development dollars to fund a pilot program called CLIMB (Career Ladders Increase Motivation and Benefits). The Institute recruits small employers, who typically lack training budgets, and offers free training for 10 employees, in exchange for the employer agreeing to take on and eventually hire a CalWORKs intern. The college conducts assessments at the worksite to identify workers' skills deficits, but training programs are offered at the college or three partner colleges (Mission, West Valley, and Foothill). Employers have requested workplace skills, literacy, and computer training for workers in entry-level, low-wage positions. The employers involved have been a diverse group, including child development, manufacturing, hospital, high tech, and janitorial firms.

- *Mission College*, in *Santa Clara, California*, partnered with Glide Memorial United Methodist Church and Manpower Professional Services World-Wide to create GlideTech, a short-term information technology training program for Cisco or A+ Networking certification that targets low-wage workers, including those with multiple barriers to employment. Manpower Professional Services places participants with local employers after they complete an initial 14-week Cisco or A+ Networking and soft skills training program. Additional introductory information technology courses are being added in spring 2001. Participants receive Mission College credit for the A+ Networking training

and can return to the program for upgrade training in the future. For the first six months of employment, workers are technically employed by Manpower Professional Services, World-Wide, which also provides benefits, while Glide Memorial Church offers post-employment support services including counseling. This minimizes employer risk during these months and increases employer willingness to offer permanent employment to program graduates.

Many TANF agencies offer a variety of post-employment supports that may improve job retention, thereby increasing the attractiveness of welfare recipients as employees. They include on-site job coaching during the initial period of employment, helping to develop work-based mentoring programs, and hiring "job retention specialists" who can help resolve problems that emerge between employee and supervisor.

By working closely with employers and helping them understand the links between training, improved performance, and retention, employers may agree to have training provided on-site after work hours or during lunches, allow some release time for training, or allow workers to "job share" so they can participate in training in their off-hours.

- *Portland Community College* has developed a pilot program with the United Parcel Service (UPS), which was experiencing a retention rate of less than 29 days. UPS agreed to hire a group of high school students who will work a four-hour morning shift and attend management and business college classes on-site at UPS in the afternoon as part of a certificate program in management and supervision. Students receive high school credit as well.

IX. Promoting Institutional or Systemic Change

Efforts to increase the responsiveness of community colleges and other postsecondary institutions to the needs and circumstances of welfare recipients and other low-income individuals are often hindered by pre-existing policies predicated on full-time, continuous enrollment in degree-granting programs. In particular:

- state funding formulas for postsecondary institutions favor academic over vocational programs;
- funding available for non-credit or short-term training programs is inadequate; and
- funding to support broader postsecondary system changes and capacity-building is also insufficient.

Additionally, state funding that is made available for special programs often comes with terms and conditions, such as insufficient payment rates or unreasonable performance standards, that make it unattractive to community colleges.

Overall, these problems indicate that a commitment to helping low-income working individuals access further education and training is currently not widely shared or reflected in poli-

cies that govern postsecondary education. Overcoming the barriers may require broader interventions or changes that are beyond the capacity of a single community college. Reforms may need to occur within the community college system or postsecondary system itself and/or at the state and federal levels. At the state and local levels, overcoming barriers may require developing new and stronger partnerships among systems such as welfare, workforce development, and economic development and exploring new sources for funding and resources.

Efforts to encourage reforms and change will probably have greater success if they are more universal in their approach — that is, targeted not only to welfare recipients but to all low-income workers including new entrants, incumbent workers, and workers with barriers. Reforms must be seen as addressing a larger need, which has been created by the changing nature of the student body (multi-ethnic, working, low-skilled), and the changing economy, which requires lifelong learning and continuous skills upgrading for workers to remain competitive in the workforce. Some reforms may need to start small as pilot or demonstration programs until their value or success is apparent and they can gain wider support.

A. Considering the Reform of Postsecondary Financing at the State Level

Creating innovative short-term training or other occupational training programs can often be done more easily for non-credit programs, but such programs usually lack stable funding sources. Funding options include allowing community colleges to retain for these purposes some portion of tuition collected by the college rather than returning it to the state coffers; increasing full-time equivalent (FTE) reimbursement rates from the state for these classes and programs, and providing special funding for start-up and/or ongoing costs.

In addition, some states reimburse community colleges at much higher rates for credit courses than for non-credit courses; other states do not provide any FTE reimbursement for non-credit courses. Some states are re-evaluating their financing structure and mechanisms to create greater equity between the programs. One approach would be to allow a certain percentage of tuition to be retained by each institution for flexible program funding that could be used for curriculum redesign as well as ongoing operational costs. Another approach would be to provide or increase FTE rates for non-credit courses:

- The Occupational Continuing Education program in *North Carolina* provides community colleges with FTE reimbursement for approved non-credit courses, including some customized training programs that are delivered at the workplace. Annual allotments are based on the previous year's enrollment.
- In 1994, *Texas* adopted legislation that provides full FTE reimbursement for some approved non-credit courses and also reimburses colleges for the development cost of customized training.

While new non-credit programs may be easier to create than credit programs, colleges will still need to bridge the non-credit and degree- or certificate-granting programs. Colleges may wish to start with credit-granting programs in the first place so that participants have opportunities to earn a widely recognized postsecondary credential.

Textbox 5

Steps That Governors and Other State Policymakers Can Take to Expand Postsecondary Opportunities for Low-Income Workers

Create a cross-agency task force with representatives from the postsecondary education, welfare, workforce development, and economic development systems and the private sector. This task force can be charged with assessing the current status of low-income individuals' participation in postsecondary education, assessing the policies and programs that support or hinder their participation, and providing recommendations for change.

Make wage progression and career advancement for low-income individuals explicit goals of states' welfare reform initiative and workforce development systems. Options include

- modifying states' work requirements for welfare recipients to allow more participation in postsecondary education;
- using TANF or state maintenance-of-effort dollars to support curricula and program redesign at community colleges and to establish campus-based supports and incentives such as case managers, child care, and reimbursement for school-related expenses;
- using WIA and WtW funds to support pre- and post-employment training; and
- requiring the active participation of community colleges and postsecondary institutions and local TANF agencies on local workforce development boards and making them partners in the one-stop systems.

As part of Governors education reform agendas, enhance the commitment of the postsecondary education system to serving low-income working individuals and providing lifelong learning opportunities. Options include

- reforming state financing of postsecondary institutions so that more funds are available for "alternative" programs, non-credit courses, and vocational programs by allowing tuition retention or increasing full-time equivalent reimbursement for these programs and/or providing special funding;

(continued)

Textbox 5 (continued)

- providing incentives and/or funds to institutions to adopt program innovations — short-term training, modularization, and career ladders — that will make it easier for working individuals to participate in education;
- establishing need-based financial aid that will support part-time and non-degree students; and
- permitting and encouraging the postsecondary system to adopt skills-based credentials that will award credit for knowledge and skills acquired through life experiences.

As mentioned earlier, some states, such as California and Washington, are appropriating TANF and/or other state funds specifically for short-term training and curriculum redesign. States agencies providing funds to community colleges and other postsecondary institutions will obviously want to ensure that the community colleges are held accountable and that performance expectations are understood and met. However, some states have found that community colleges are reluctant to accept or apply for funds for short-term training programs if they require performance-based contracts and payment points. Moreover, because in some states community colleges are prohibited from incurring debt, they cannot enter into contracts if payment is made after the services are rendered. Some community colleges consider these contracts to be too risky, given the characteristics of the population to be served, especially if the reimbursement rates seem low.

In Washington, community colleges must submit a plan for their pre-employment training program that has the support and sign-off of the important partners. For example, the local welfare agency must commit to referring qualified recipients to training, and private employers must agree to give first hiring consideration to individuals who complete the training. The data that are collected on placement and wages will factor into the state's decision to fund a particular training program in subsequent years.

While special funds enable community colleges to undertake special programming, such as having English as a Second Language and vocational instructors team-teach, in the long run it may be a less stable source of funding particularly if the TANF "surplus" disappears owing to federal budget cuts or a downturn in the economy. The preferred approach might be to receive an FTE reimbursement and additional funding from TANF or other sources for program development and special needs.

B. Working Toward a Shared Vision

The growing demand for more highly skilled workers and the growing call for accountability at all levels of education in preparing students for the twenty-first century workforce create a timely opportunity to build support for a vision of community colleges that includes helping

low-wage workers participate and succeed in postsecondary education. It is part of a broader vision of postsecondary education that is focusing on performance outcomes and results for all providers and all learners. Several states — Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, and West Virginia — have recently restructured their community college system (or are considering doing so) to increase the number of adult learners, improve workforce training, and strengthen their role in economic development.

At the state level, restructuring of FTE reimbursements, specific funding for curriculum redesign, and short-term training and welfare reform policies such as suspending federal time limits while TANF recipients attend college can go a long way toward helping community colleges accept this vision as part of their mission.

In addition to support from the governor, legislature, and community college system, a "culture change" that reflects an acceptance of this vision must also occur within particular institutions among faculty and administrators. One strategy is for the state or federal government to highlight and publicly acclaim exemplary community colleges and other postsecondary institutions serving low-income individuals. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor and American Association of Community Colleges annual workforce development awards have recognized community colleges for their welfare-to-work programs.

Commitment to serving low-income workers can also be a factor when hiring, granting tenure, and paying bonuses to faculty and administrators. Another strategy is to provide professional development to existing faculty and staff to break down stereotypes of welfare recipients and help staff better understand their circumstances and support needs. Involving the advocacy community and the media in telling the success stories of welfare recipients who have benefited from training and in highlighting innovative programs may also be an effective strategy in gaining support at all levels.

Building a shared vision may require an institution or agency, or a group of them, within a state to assume a leadership role, convene potential stakeholders, and explore how this vision fits in with their organizational missions and goals. (Interested stakeholders may wish to consult textbox 5, which offers action steps for governors and other potential leaders to expand postsecondary opportunities for low-income workers.)

Appendix A

Additional Sources of Funding

Providing education and training to low-wage individuals for higher-skilled jobs can help to keep and attract businesses and strengthen communities; it is therefore consistent with the purposes and goals of many programs, including workforce development, economic development, and even community development. In addition to using TANF and WIA funds, states can look to other programs for funding education and training and to develop partnerships.

- *Adult Education and Literacy.* The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, authorizes funding to states for adult education and literacy programs. While most states administer the program through their education department or state workforce board, some states administer it through the state community college board. In any case, postsecondary institutions are among the eligible recipients of multi-year grants or contracts to provide basic skills, literacy education, and GED programs. States are required to target services to low-income students, individuals with disabilities, single parents and displaced homemakers, and individuals with multiple barriers to educational enhancement including limited English proficiency. States must coordinate these activities with their other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities, and recipients of adult education and family literacy grants are mandatory partners in the local one-stop system. (See http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/InfoBoard/legis.html for more information.)

- *Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Program.* Under the Perkins Act, federal funds are provided to state boards of vocational education to provide vocational-technical education programs and services to youth and adults. Vocational-technical education is defined as organized educational programs offering sequences of courses directly related to preparing individuals for paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree. Local educational institutions and postsecondary institutions are eligible recipients of subgrants from the state, and states establish in their five-year plans the percentages of funds that will go to secondary schools and to postsecondary institutions. (Nationwide, 30 percent of the funds are awarded to postsecondary institutions.) Funds are most frequently used for occupational-relevant equipment, vocational curriculum materials, materials for learning labs, curriculum development or modification, staff development, career counseling and guidance activities, efforts toward academic-vocational integration, supplemental services for special populations, vocational staff hiring, remedial classes, and tech prep program expansion. (See http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/perkins.html for more information.)

- *Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Grants Program.* Department of Labor WtW funds can provide job readiness, employment activities, job placement services,

post-employment services, supports, and individual development accounts for "hard-to-serve" TANF recipients and former recipients as well as noncustodial parents. While all discretionary grants have already been awarded (and many to collaborations that involved community colleges), state formula grant funds that were largely passed through to local workforce boards can be expended over a five-year period.[19] The original law, enacted in 1997, prohibited the use of WtW funds for education and training activities for those not already employed. Amendments enacted in 1999 expanded the list of allowable activities to include up to six months of vocational education and job training prior to employment. (See http://wtw.doleta.gov for more information.)

- *Community Development Block Grant.* The Housing and Urban Development-administered Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provides grants to cities and towns to improve the housing and living conditions of low- and moderate-income individuals. Large cities receive their grants directly from the federal government, but in smaller localities the funds go to the state, which has considerable flexibility in determining the use of funds, including training for low-income individuals. In *Iowa,* the Department of Economic Development administers the small cities portion of the CDBG and is using some of these funds for its Career Link program, which provides job training, child care, and transportation for working poor or underemployed individuals. Cities, towns, or counties can apply for the Career Link dollars and must identify the community college that will provide the training and the businesses that are expected to hire the trainees.

- *H1-B Technical Skills Training Grants.* The Department of Labor (DOL) H1-B Technical Skills Training Grants are a new source of funds for developing education and training programs. In 2000, DOL awarded over $95 million in grants to local workforce investment boards applying in partnership with community colleges, colleges and universities, local governments, employers, and one-stop centers, and other employment and training entities for high-skill technology training for workers in areas where companies are facing labor shortages. Awards have ranged from $900,000 to over $2.5 million. The funds can be used for training employed and unemployed individuals in such targeted occupations as computer engineering, Internet technology, Web design, client server application development, data communications and networking, computer support specialties, software quality assurance analysis, electronics, machinist skills, accounting, e-commerce, and health care. While many of the programs are geared toward education or skills levels that are higher than many low-wage workers possess, others programs specifically target minority, female, or disabled individuals who are currently underrepresented in the technology field. (See http://www.wdsc.org/sga/awards for more information.)

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[19]The FY 2001 omnibus appropriations bill enacted on December 15, 2000, extended the length of time that states could expend the formula funds from three to five years. Thus, grant funds awarded in 1998 can be spent through FY 2002 and grant funds awarded in 1999 can be spent through FY 2003.

- *State-Funded Incumbent Worker Programs.* Almost every state has state-funded employer-focused training programs (or customized job training programs) to encourage job retention and employment growth among existing firms. In 1998, state spending on employer-focused training programs totaled $575 million, with states providing grants ranging from less than $25,000 to $400,000 to individual projects. States generally fund these programs through general fund appropriations, special assessments on employers based on unemployment insurance fund tax, or the sale of bonds. While the major focus is on incumbent workers, a number of states are combining these efforts with efforts aimed at welfare recipients, the unemployed, and dislocated workers. In 11 states, these customized training programs are administered directly by community college systems.[20]

  - The 58 community colleges in *North Carolina* are the sole deliverers of the state's customized training programs — providing inexpensive and accessible training for both incumbent workers and those newly hired. The largest program, Occupational Continuing Education, offers skills development opportunities for $35 per trainee per course. Individuals may take standard courses at a college on their own or through sponsorship by their employer. Colleges also work with employers to provide customized courses. Occupational areas include industrial and management training, computer skills, public service such as fire and rescue, and health.

  - The Employment and Training Panel in *California* is a customized training program funded by a small assessment (.01 percent of wages) on employers who pay unemployment insurance taxes. A portion of these funds are now set aside annually to help firms train current or former welfare recipients. In many cases, training is provided by the community colleges.

  - In *Indiana*, Advance Indiana requires that state-funded training programs result in portable skills credentials such as a GED, apprentice status, college degree, or widely recognized certifications. State-funded training can be provided to no- or low-skilled individuals, including welfare-to-work clients.

One of the challenges in using multiple funding sources and working with multiple partners is ensuring that program rules, reporting, and accountability and eligibility requirements are not at cross-purposes with one another. As problems and barriers are identified, the administration, Congress, and states need to work together to address these issues.

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[20]For more information on state incumbent worker training programs, see *A Comprehensive Look at State-Funded, Employer-Focused Job Training Programs*, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Washington, DC, 1999. (See http://www.nga.org/cda/files/FULLREPORT.pdf.)

Appendix B

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**It is with regret that we inform you that Robert Pendleton died in December 2000. His expertise in workforce development is recognized, and he will be missed.*

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About MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. We are dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through our research and the active communication of our findings, we seek to enhance the effectiveness of social policies and programs. MDRC was founded in 1974 and is located in New York City and San Francisco.

MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods such as large-scale studies to determine a program's effects, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.

About NGA

Since their initial meeting in 1908 to discuss interstate water problems, the governors have worked through the National Governors Association to deal collectively with issues of public policy and governance. The association's ongoing mission is to support the work of the governors by providing a bipartisan forum to help shape and implement national policy and to solve state problems.

The members of the National Governors Association (NGA) are the governors of the 50 states, the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands, and the commonwealths of the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico. The association has a nine-member Executive Committee and three standing committees — on Economic Development and Commerce, Human Resources, and Natural Resources. Through NGA's committees, the governors examine and develop policy and address key state and national issues. Special task forces often are created to focus gubernatorial attention on federal legislation or on state-level issues. The association works closely with the Administration and Congress on state-federal policy issues through its offices in the Hall of the States in Washington, DC.

The Center for Best Practices is a vehicle for sharing knowledge about innovative state activities, exploring the impact of federal initiatives on state government, and providing technical assistance to states. The center works in a number of policy fields, including agriculture and rural development, economic development, education, energy and environment, health, social services, technology, trade, transportation, and workforce development.

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